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ABSTRACT

The attitudes of Cuban- and Anglo-American elementary school teachers concerning boys and girls were compared. It appears to be generally accepted in Anglo-American culture that males are considered hostile and aggressive in school situations, while females are considered passive and conforming. Conversely, in the Latin American cultures, the essence of the male is emotional, earthly, and courteous, and of the female is controlled, spiritual, and assertive. Teachers from different cultural backgrounds expect different behaviors from boys and girls. Sixty-six Anglo-American and 42 Cuban-American elementary school teachers were given a semantic differential scale based on terms descriptive of elementary school boys and girls and asked to check terms they thought most descriptive of the behaviors and attitudes of the different sexes. Anglo-American teachers tended to find boys more giggly, silent, bossy, steady, open, vexing, factual, rational, bad, ugly, independent, and obtrusive. Cuban-American teachers tended to find boys more morose, dependent, talkative, shy, protective, creative, pleasing, emotional, sweet, pretty, and imaginative. Anglo-American teachers found girls more virile, obtrusive, mischievous, sharing, straightforward, careless, dependent, quiet, and cowardly. Cuban-American teachers tended to find girls more prissy, shy, malicious, sneaky, independent, loud, brave, and selfish. These differences in perceptions are not considered inherently bad since some of the traits of males and females considered negative by one culture are considered positive by the other. It is hoped that teachers from different cultural backgrounds would be made aware of possible conflicts which their expectations might cause when working with children from cultural backgrounds different from their own. (JD)

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ANGLO-AMERICAN AND CUBAN-AMERICAN TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS

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ANGLO-AMERICAN AND CUBAN-AMERICAN TEACHERS" PERCEPTION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS

Next to the home and television, the school is often considered the most influential influence on children's perception of themselves and their roles. Certainly, children's perceptions of themselves as human beings, as boys or girls and men and women are taught both directly and indirectly, through school books and teacher attitudes.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss the attitudes of teachers from two different cultural backgrounds, Cuban and Anglo, concerning elementary school boys and girls.

The South Florida Community is comprised of American Blacks, Anglos and a significant population of individuals from a wide variety of Caribbean and South American Nations including thousands of Cubans who have left their homeland since the 1959 revolution. Because of its proximity to the homeland and genial climate, many cubans have opted to settle in South Florida.

Significantly, there are large areas in South Florida which are predominantly Cuban in both language and culture. One area, known as "Little Havana," comprises roughly forty square miles and houses many thousands of individuals (At this time, Dade County, alone, is estimated to have a population of over 1.5 million of which 600,000 are Cuban). A generation of young people have grown up in these Cuban dominant communities and are becoming a mainstay in the development of South Florida in all professions and business.

One of the professions for which many Cubans are training is that of elementary school teacher. Since it has been noted, schools are a significant factor in role development, any differences between the cultural expectations of teachers and students as to what makes a "good" boy or girl has the potential for conflict. The following brief review of the literature points out some contrasts noted between Latin and Anglo cultures as well as some studies in sexual stereotyping of elementary school children.

Review of the Literature

With the increase of awareness of androgyny, sexism, and sexual stereotyping of men and women, there has developed a plethora of articles and books which deal with these topics as well as gender role assignments. However, only a meager amount of research has been conducted concerning teacher attitudes towards boys and girls.

Block found that American child-rearing values were different from those of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and England. She concluded, "From this cross cultural-perspective, then, current American child-rearing values appear... to magnify the culturally given differences between the sexes. (1973, p. 520)"

Often we are told that males in the Anglo culture are considered hostile and aggressive in school situations while females are considered passive and conforming.

> "Little boys must be strong and active, little girls must be cute and cuddly...By school age, boys are more aggressive whereas girls are more verbal...Boys are learning how to be strong while girls are learning to be caring, (B. Forisha, 1973, p. 34").

Conversely, "...in the Latin American cultures, the essence of the male is emotional, earthly, and polite (courteous), and of the female is controlled, spiritual and assertive. (J. Quinones, 1979, p. 31)"

That stereotyping takes place in the classroom was demonstrated by Serbin et. al. when they found that teachers respond differently to boys and girls in the classroom they concluded that"...different patterns of teacher child interaction for boys and girls are clearly present and may well result in further sex differences and social development. (1973, p. 803)."

Finally Payne (1981) and Silvern (1978) both found that teachers respond differently to boys and girls.

Clearly, the literature demonstrates that different behaviors are expected by teachers of boys and girls.

METHOD

Subjects

One hundred-thirty pre-service and in-service teachers were given a semantic differential scale developed by the investigator. (Dempsey, 1973). Because of omissions and/or failure to mark response sheets correctly the actual numbers of responses varied from item to item. Even in these cases the investigator felt that the samples were still large enough to draw conclusions.

Since the instrument was given to individuals from diverse backgrounds including Jamaican, American Indian, Peruvian and, American, Blacks only those subjects identifying themselves as Anglo-American and Cuban were actually compared. As a result of this refinement, sixty-six Anglos and forty-two Cubans formed the subject pool.

Procedure

The investigator developed a semantic differential scale based on terms descriptive of elementary school boys and girls elicited from pre-service and in-service teacher (Dempsey, 1973). Thirty-nine seven-step, bi-polar scales were developed utilizing Roget's Thesaurus and Webster's New Dictionary of Synonyms to find opposite or nearly opposite terms. The subjects were given the semantic differential scale and asked to mark eletrographic score sheets in order that compilation of data might be facilitated.

No attempt was made to determine the age, sex, grade level preference, educational background or other possibly relevant factors in drawing conclusions in this study. A Chi Square score was found for each of the thirty-nine scales to determine if statistically significant differences existed between Anglos and Cubans.

Results

The results were considered statistically significant if they reached either the .10 or the .05 level of significance.

Seven scales were significant between the .10 and .05 levels for boys and two were significant at these levels for girls. Five scales were significant at the .05 level and below for boys while eight scales were significant at these levels for girls.

Differences occuring between the .10 and .05 levels include the following scales:

Boys	
Morose	Giggly
Shy	Obtrusive
Protective	Open
Pleasing	Vexing
Factual	Imaginative
Pretty	Ugly
Independent	Dependent

Girls	
Mischievous	Malicious
Sneaky	Straightforward

Differences occuring at the .05 level or below include the following scales:

Boys	
Talkative	Silent
Creative	Dull
Emotional	Rational
Sweet	Dependent

Girls	
Prissy	Virile
Shy	Obtrusive
Selfish	Careless
Independent	Dependent
Loud	Quiet
Brave	Cowardly
Follower	Leader

Because of the relatively small samples, trends are difficult to establish. However, it would appear that Anglos tended to find boys more giggly-bossy, silent, steady, open vexing, factual, rational, bad, ugly, independent and obtrusive. Cubans tended to find boys more morose, dependent, talkative, shy, protective, creative, pleasing, emotional, sweet, pretty and imaginative.

Anglos tended to find girls more virile, obtrusive, mischievous, sharing straightforward, careless, dependent, quiet, cowardly and more of a leader. Cubans tended to find girls as more prissy, shy, malicious, sneaky, tattly tales, independent, loud, brave, followers and selfish.

Discussion

The results of this research demonstrate that there are definitely differences in the perceptions of elementary school teachers of Anglo and Cuban backgrounds concerning children. This is not inherently bad since some of the traits of males and females considered negative by one culture were considered positive by the other. One would hope

that teachers from different cultural backgrounds would be made well aware of the possible conflicts which their expectations might cause when working with children from cultural backgrounds other than their own. Finally, we would hope teachers would emphasize the positive aspects of masculinity and femininity for children no matter what their backgrounds.

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